

THE TRAGEDY OF BAIKIE. By H. K.

CHAPTER I. SIR RAOUL AND LADY DOVACH.



The time was dim and dark in the distance when Christianity was in its tender youth and indulged in the gallant romance of the Crusades. The place is one rich now in history and tradition, rich in legends as the broad dim strath is bountiful in woods and corn, and wild and strange in story as its dens are dreary in their heathy solitudes, and its linns black cauldrons of horror.

But the time was not come: the Laird of Craig had not murdered his man and seen the Evil One leaping and grinning from his lurking-place in the cave by the Reeky Linn. The brave, bold matron had not stood faithful to her trust on "the hie castle wa'," and, in the name of her absent husband, defied "Argyle and a' his men," and his cannon planted on the brae across the water, and made to play on her fortress till it was a shattered shell, and afterwards lain down "to dee" at the Kames of Airlie, where the smoke of

the burning of hearth and roof-tree was carried to her by the cruel wind. Even Lady Dorothy had not loaded and fired the arquebuss, through the loophole in the gateway meeting the portcullis, at the wild Highland caterans. The lament had not been uttered over "the gracious gude Lord Ogilvie," fallen at Harlaw; nor the great sword of Deuchar of Deuchar carried back, but not loosed from his grasp, by the squire who hacked off his strong right hand as it lay clenching the hilt by his side in the ranks of Saxon and Celtic dead, and brought it home as a token to his lady, sitting watching in her chamber. Only the ambitious learned Knights Templars held the lands of Templeton, and men already muttered darkly, and women whispered with white lips, how Gilchrist Lord of Angus had stabbed to the heart his false wife, the sister of a king, and her blood was washed out by the pure water trickling from the cold well, where the sun's rays never fell

beneath the rocks and ashes and elms of the Castle of Mains.

The land was lonely hill-side or thicket, with patches of coarse grain and pastures for bees round the baronial or knightly tower, the sacred abbey or the little hamlet cowering meekly in the shadow of its great neighbours, the powers temporal and spiritual. The wild beasts—boar and wolf, hart and coney—abounded in a state of nature, or exceeded nature; for, down by the Nine-stane-rig, the huge green dragon, spewing smoke and spitting fire, devoured at one fell meal the nine fair daughters of the hynd of Durward of the Cateclough.

On a bend of the Isla, where the silver water ran round a fringed promontory and productive haughs stretched right and left, rose the turrets of Baikie. The house was strong in site and strong in architecture—a battlemented, rugged, red sandstone building, with gateway and watch-tower, court and causeway, and moat filled with oozing mud, clayey stagnant water and dank plants, and fed by springs from the clear flowing river. And Baikie was trebled in strength by the character of its master. No feudal chief far or near was feared and followed like Sir Raoul. Bold, daring, fierce; lord of these acres, lord of his vassals, unaccountable save to God and his patron saint; engaged once in his life in a crusade against the infidel, buying immunity for all crime, for sacrilege itself, by mowing down the turbaned heads, as the reaper cuts the bearded ears in the golden September; losing every grain of scruple and every note of softness in the fulfilment of the vow—the performance of the sacrifice. It is a strain to a poor, modest, disciplined, modern mind to measure Sir Raoul in the plenitude of his might and the boundlessness of his will, to balance the mountain of his temptations, the meagreness of his lessons, the guilt of his soul.

In his own day, Sir Raoul was hated, feared, and half-worshipped with a dread admiration; rude in health, in the prime of his age, no belted earl or crowned prince ventured to control him on his own ground. There he ruled paramount: there he dispensed justice; there he took a life or a score of lives—or restored a stolen quey-calf or a silver-hooped quaiich. Where his own passions were not concerned, he must have evinced a stern sort of truthfulness as well as an unflinching determination, for no man despised him, though many cursed his name, and if you search into antiquity, and trace cause and effect, you will find that the liar on the throne does not need to be a coward in order to be withered by the breath of men's scorn. Sir Raoul's own people, his soldiers in battle, his yeomen in peace, his servants—if you except the black boy Mahound—cherished a certain pride in Sir Raoul. They were proud of his invincibleness; they were proud of his prowess; they were, in their own humble submission, quite capable of crowing over the abject quailing of their enemies—the bands of feudal rivals, the grim, ragged robbers descending from the snowy Grampians, the black Danes still landing on the coast, the presumptuous priest who questioned whether service against the Moor should continually atone for neglected shrine, invaded

sanctuary, and plundered treasure. His people had a grisly glory in Sir Raoul's feats with the cross-bow and the broad-sword, in his fencing and wrestling, his hunting and fowling, in the fleetness of his foot, "the prance of his proud steed," "the stroke of his oar," even in his cursing over the spiced cup in the morning, and his troling over the wasaill-bowl at night. They had a trembling pleasure in his big, fair, formidable, stately, splendid person, where, when he was in full armour, barbaric steel and gold and pearls and rubies met. The morion and the breast-plate, the thigh-pieces and the armlets, flashed white or glowed in ruddy light. There was a string of fairer beads than ever father told around his brawny throat, and hanging down on his breast, and on his signet-ring and the scabbard of his sword and the clasp of his bonnet, when he laid aside his helmet and sat in his hall, jewels, crimson as drops of Cyprus wine, flickered and gleamed. An open, imperious, dauntless face was Sir Raoul's, with the sanguine yellow beard, the eagle nose, the eagle eye, and (Heaven help them!) some fancied that the strong mouth—which had a trick of opening to grind the white sharp teeth—was not without a semblance of the eagle's beak. But the brave bold face was worn with passion, and the grey eyes were hollow with unassatisfied desire. It was inevitable with the man, a hero in his instincts and a tyrant in his practices, and circumstances brought it cunningly home. Sir Raoul of Baikie, unchallenged and unopposed as far as the eye could travel, over wood and water, moor and mountain, was thwarted at his heart's core, and pining with singular unrest. There was one soul within the land, the barony, the tower, the marriage chamber, that owned no allegiance to Sir Raoul: despot over all besides, he had craved favour in that quarter, and craved in vain.

The Lord his Maker, and Sir Raoul knew how he had won Lady Dovach—won! how he had stormed, seized, bound, but not bent her, though she was the palest, most fragile thing of earth, air, or water; the lily in the shaded, gloomy, built-in garden, looked more erect, more stubborn, more staunch.

Dovach had been the sole child of a laird, whose lands marched with Baikie—a moderate man, who had said neither yea nor nay to the blustering of Sir Raoul. Dovach had grown up in those primitive days, in a rough, motherless solitude, a white, quiet, still girl with features like chiselled marble and eyes, also, like the deep, cool, fathomless, but intent eyes of a saint in a picture from beyond the seas; like those of the figures in the altar-piece of the little kirk of Foulis, yonder, where a sinful man might contemplate the Crucifixion, the dying Saviour, the thieves, Herod with his crown and sceptre, the high-priest in his mitre and bearing the roll of the law, the Roman centurion brandishing his sword, the Apostles and the women, all the persons, great and small—the very devils and angels waiting on the dead. Ninety-nine impetuous, arrogant men of war would have recoiled from Dovach, or brushed by her as if she had indeed been a sculptured or limned image; the hundredth might have run mad for her unearthly, spiritual charms,

as Sir Raoul did, after he had once beheld her walking in the gloomy fir-wood, and singing and smiling to herself as she passed by.

To give the devil and Sir Raoul their due, he sought her first peacefully of her father, and it was only when she was civilly denied him, having been contracted in her cradle to an orphan cousin, reared with her in her father's house, that Sir Raoul brought his peculiar forces to the charge, summoned horse, and sounded trumpet, and as the Wolf of Badenoch sat down with his clan, and starved and scared out the Countess of Mar in Kildrummie, so Sir Raoul without the smallest ceremony, invested his future father-in-law in his hold, and in coat of mail, and with gauntleted hand and spear in rest, bade him deliver up his young daughter, or perish in the adverse contest. It was no jesting matter, when lion-like, Sir Raouls inclined to roe-like Dovachs grazing on adjoining pastures.

Dovach's father, a taciturn, gentle man of his era, was, nevertheless, resolute in bearing the brunt of his contumacy, and with moral courage defended himself as stoutly as the hottest and most brutal, and was slain at last leading a desperate sally through the sheds and outhouses with his daughter behind him, on his white horse. Some said it was Sir Raoul's lance that pierced the harness somewhat rusty and disused, but it were hard to tell who dealt the fatal blows in the mêlée, though without doubt it was Sir Raoul's gripe that arrested the flight of the old white horse, stiff as its master, but good blood in case of need, and pulled down the fainting girl, and carried her, lying so still, on his panting breast, of all places, into the small chapel, which his simple engines had half unroofed. Two days before, the cousin had been struck below the arm by an arrow on the wall. He was a still lad, like all Dovach's race—the word went that she was indifferent to his unobtrusive regard, alighted his patient devotion; but she laboured all the same to pluck the arrow from his wound—that night, when the summer thunder and lightning were rolling and flashing over the host at the gate, and the sore-pressed company within—she held her hand on his heart long after it had ceased to beat; then she washed the body fair and clean, and smoothed the hair, soft and silken as her own, and commanded the priest, praying for the beleaguered family in their extremity, to forbear, and leaving the living to care for themselves, go sing masses for one departed soul, all through the night watches to the pearly dawn rising over the crumbling ruin and the blood-stains. That young body was not placed, like the laird's, in honourable state before the altar in the chapel, it was thrown with the herd to choke up the draw-well ere the conquerors quitted the dismantled building, but Dovach saw it as plain as the sun above her, lying beside the corpse of her gray-headed father, and close to the bier where she stood, while the faltering priest hastily blessed her and her true bridegroom.

There was frozen, unheeding death present at these nuptials. There was a splash of blood upon the shaken wall, a pool of blood on the floor, where the wounded men had lain to confess and be assolized, blood half-dried on the bridegroom's mailed

feet, and half-wiped from his sword, blood on which she was fain to look with a fascinated gaze, on the very kirtle of the bride; but lightly would Sir Raoul have recked of these mischances had Dovach's eyes been less stony, or her hand less cold. Dovach knelt of her own will, and spoke the responses with a free tongue, as her dead father would have had her, lest a worse thing should befall her. Sir Raoul carried her away that very night, his wedded wife, in triumph to his strong tower of Baikie, rising secure and prosperous by the glittering Iala water—lit up by the last sun-rays come out after the storm of yesterday, and gladdening a refreshed and blooming world—a wide contrast to the devastation and the silence, the degradation and decay they had left behind them.

Now, Sir Raoul said, she was all his own; soon would he teach her to forget her father's desolate house, soon she would turn to him for companionship and caresses. Sir Raoul of Baikie had wooed as became him, he might not "sue with the deer." If he had rendered her fatherless, he could swear like Richard Crookback, in generations to come, "twas thy heavenly face that set me on," and Dovach like poor, amitten, unstable Anne, would cry, and cover that face, and geck, and blush, and credit, and forgive him, because, you know, it was her face that was to blame, after all. But still remained Dovach, as when she lay like lead on his heaving corslet, and she foiled him by her very frailty. Yet she was not really frail—there is a mock, bullying courage, and there is true valour, let it vaunt with the dark Gascon, or rest mute and phlegmatic with the sandy-haired German; and there is veritable weakness in flippant forwardness, brazen audacity, raging fury, while there may be no feebleness in the slight woman who holds down the convulsed child—her heart's darling, or tends the agonised man—the desire of her eyes, or stands on the deck of the wrecked ship, or once walked upon the scaffold with trembling limbs and quivering voice indeed, but as resolute to die for the truth, as any bull-necked, broad-fisted champion of error. Sir Raoul swore in wrath and mortification that these timid, undemonstrative tempers have no marrow for *dourness*; that he could have tamed a vixen, and silenced a shrew, and taught her to come to his hand in a week, or a month, but this fine, shy, subtle nature baffled him. Perhaps he was right; these frank, outspoken, coarser constitutions receive at the best caricatured, loose impressions, and give and take them perpetually. They express their very essence, and have done with it, borrowing the style and character of the next scene, circumstances, individuals, with whom they come in contact. Once the wrong is played out, these boisterous, fresh, not untrue for the time frames, bound as readily to the inflicter of the injury, as to any other. A lively, brawling woman, tearing her hair, and kept by force from laying violent hands on Sir Raoul, might have accepted her spouse in room of father and kinsman, and kissed him heartily, before the year was out—blotting out all his cruelties, identifying herself with his pettiest interests, serving him, cherishing him, perhaps taming him in the end, with a simplicity and a submission that God forbid any man should scorn.

But Dovach's was a shrinking, intact, adhesive

spirit, difficult as a wild bird to catch; once arrested and fixed, faithful to immortality. Think of such a fine, delicate, yet enduring thing, like the nervous tissue resisting to the point of dissolution, unstrengthened, unhardened by early training, accustomed always to feed upon itself as she sat at her loom, or strayed across the wilds, thus snatched and wrung, filled with sights of horror, sounds of anguish, and then in the madness of ignorance, expected and required to be charmed (half-coaxed, half-cowed), into speedy inconstancy, contentment, cheer.

And like the nervous tissue Dovach was goaded into false activity; the quiet, pale girl learnt to oppose and disobey the conqueror; the cool, deep eyes flamed, the mild tongue bit and stung until the white child seemed fiend-possessed.

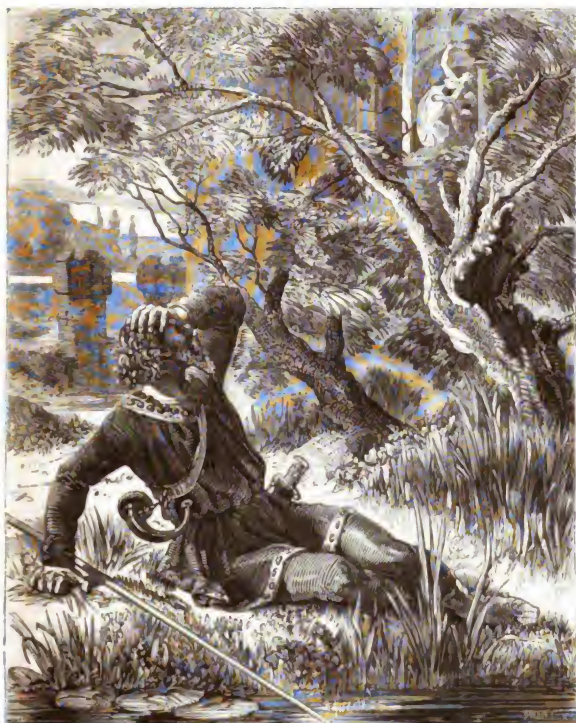
It was only to Sir Raoul that the unhappy lady thus broke forth; to the followers over whom her evil fortune had made her mistress she was passive and gentle; and of her own accord she would have woven and read her missal, and paced the battlements, pondering morbidly her misery and sin as mechanically as any nun within her cloisters.

But Sir Raoul could not let Lady Dovach alone. Sometimes he abased himself, and prayed and vowed at her feet; sometimes he raged, and threatened, and oppressed, and abused her; but surely it was grievous retribution to him to love her as he continued to do, for different as light and darkness, the iron was to the full indestructible as the gossamer—loving her, devoured with love for her, grasping her, he could no more possess her spirit, subdue her will, receive one fond look, thrill to one kind touch, hearken to one gracious word, drink and have his thirst slaked, eat and find his hunger appeased, than if she were a saint enthroned in the unattainable skies, or a demon plunged into the fathomless deeps. Baikie with its high turrets, its vigilantly guarded haughs, its store-houses, its droves of cattle, its merry men, its lala gliding gaily to its own sweet song, its bower in the centre of the castle where pale Dovach sat undreaming of escape save by slow death, was a place of torment to Sir Raoul.

(To be continued.)

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CHAPTER II. THE DEMON AND THE DOOM OF BAIKIE.



MANY an old Scottish house has its lingering myth of its Brownie or shape of "ill" haunting the home of some wretched wizard laird like hapless Sir Thomas or great Michael Scott, and after the example of the rough hairy dog treading on the footsteps of Major Weir, or of the great grey-eyed cat eating bodily the Aberdonian Master. Wise folks pretend to discover in these figments the rough descriptions of highly educated native, or curious foreign animals which astonished the faculties and imposed upon the credulity of the vulgar. They may be right; Brownies may be monkeys after all, and bristling accomplished dogs and vicious cats early Sir Isaacs and special modifications of the tiger; because in sooth the demon of Baikie was nothing worse than Sir Raoul's Moorish boy, trophy of his passage of arms against the infidel, named Mahound, kicked and cuffed to atone for the unrighteous mercy which had spared the one life and brought the lad to the north country for a jest,

and a horror to Sir Raoul's obtuse, superstitious neighbours.

All the little world of Baikie certainly believed Mahound no better than he should be, though freely allowing for the extremely low standard of slave, black-a-moor, paynim. Possibly Sir Raoul was not without a shade of the same appalling faith, and buffeted Mahound on principle—since he had his principles—those of his age, class, and character. Mahound's tribulations, though they were legion and hideous to chronicle, were by no means undeserved. This lad growing to man's estate was neither noble, chivalrous Saracen, nor brutish, fatuous negro: he sprung from some tribe in the interior, and he was malignant, cunning, base, and revengeful to excess. His tawny skin, blue-white eyeballs, broad, distended nose, wide mouth, spiteful snarl and sneer, his very outlandish turban, to his compulsory acquaintances most expressly typified wickedness.

He was incessantly in mischief and strife, from which he would have barely escaped even under the powerful protection of Sir Raoul, who did not choose that any other than himself should dispose of his varlet, but for the chill inaction imposed upon Mahound's comrades by his doubtful origin. What if the Devil were his progenitor? Then no advantage could follow the use of earthly weapons; nay, the fellow who took the initiative might have the awful prospect of a combat with Satan super-added to the aggravations of Mahound.

One would think Sir Raoul had discord enough in his hall, without maintaining this full-grown imp among his men-at-arms; but Sir Raoul was perverse and dogged, even supposing the question did not resolve itself, like that of modern slaves, into the complete and ominous obscurity veiling the future position of Mahound, if his unfortunate master did consent to let him go. Sir Raoul punished himself: his instinctive truth and down-right fire revolted at the vileness of Mahound's frauds and atrocities. There was no love lost between master and man. Mahound did his duty by Raoul, but he did it sullenly; and Sir Raoul maltreated him in a long course of reckless outrages, deepening in affront and barbarity as his Lady Dovach testified some pity for the abhorred and shunned wretch.

This pity of Dovach's was the most transparent thing in the world, scarcely hiding her own aversion to the victim. Both Sir Raoul and Mahound knew its extent; but in the knight's resentment that she, who would not deign to extend to him the faintest hope of relenting, or better far—oblivion, should show the least charity to another, he persecuted his black slave more intentionally and more hatefully; and Dovach, perceiving his vexation, was more distinctly and deliberately humane to the inhuman object of contention. Oh, miserable pair! rushing away from the one star in their darkness.

The abbot at Brechin feasted his lay-brethren and entertained his children with a miracle play. The diversion was welcomed with gaping relish, and the half-starved bondsmen, uncertain of their lives an hour beyond their chief's pleasure, flocked in masses to be fed like hogs, and laugh as donkeys bray, for one blessed day's intermission in the toils and cares and monotony of their lives.

For some reason of policy, or pride or good humour, Sir Raoul vouchsafed to his whole household generous leave of absence for the entire summer's day, and dispatched them betimes, under the guidance of his younger brother, to bear bulk in the festivities. Sir Raoul himself chose to tarry at home, as the Lady Dovach, weak and spiritless, kept her chamber; and at the last moment, for some shadow of an excuse, he remanded Mahound, scourging him like a dog, and confining him in a den. But all the others, of every degree—seneschal, chaplain, bower-women, cook, scullion, groom—departed joyfully, facing round in the rosy morning to do low obeisance to the last glimpse of Sir Raoul in his supreme pomp and dignity, none divining that they could behold him otherwise than with honour and envy.

Sir Raoul fed his horses, dogs, and falcons with his own hands; stalked about among his armour

and antlers until he found a fishing-rod, crossed the low bridge, and proceeded to wile away his lazy leisure by fishing in the Iala opposite his house of Baikie.

The day was cloudless and brilliant, so that one could watch the sparrow-hawk a black mote to the verge of the horizon, unlike that lowering, electric atmosphere of flashing torrents and brief sunshine when he brought home Dovach. Brought her home! nay, committed his prisoner to gyves and chains and sure ward. The sand-martins were twittering and fluttering from bank to bank; shoals of minnows rendered the waters alive; plumes of tufted, almond-scented meadow queen nodded in the breeze, the white water-ranunculus floated dreamily, like miniature water-lilies, in broad patches on the stream; and the long green fleshy ribs of the river-grass barred it from side to side. But that great, powerful, passionate Sir Raoul, in doublet and sword-belt, with hunting-knife and bugle-horn, heeded the soft beauty of the little spot of earth as little as the kine that dropped down to drink of the water of the Iala. He felt the unusual silence and idleness: no mower whetting his scythe, no herdsman whistling in his dog, no straying children: it oppressed him, though it did not cross his imagination that these brooding pauses in ordinary life (so wholesome are stir and labour) have been now and again seized upon for the accomplishment of ghastly visions, the perpetration of horrid crimes.

Sir Raoul tired of his sport, and sat among the rushes, crushing the brittle reeds in his fervent grasp,—crushing a little, light, shyest of the shy, sky-blue butterfly among them. He pondered on the bitterness of his lot, the lovelessness where he sought love, the parched dryness of that fountain. Oh, for one drop of nectar for him from this pale, protesting girl, an avenging spirit in his arms! Madness! Seek ruddy, buxom, reasonable, earthly women, and expect returning regard from them: leave this captious, intolerant being to mope away in her unity and defiance. But he could not give her up: he raged, and fumed, and sickened desperately at the idea. No, though he recollected with a double pang a little rosy girl he had loved long, long ago,—loved in utter carelessness,—who had fluttered joyously at his approach, and lamented drearily at his departure. O Dovach, unwomanly woman, never to be consoled, won truly, but unwooed, unwooed! What had become of the silly little girl? He had not stayed to ask before; some other occupation had intervened; a report of found treasure; the first enlistment in the raid against the Crescent for the good of his soul; a quarrel with Sir Niel, or Ramsay, or Wedderburn: and her father had removed her, he knew not where; he never asked. She had ceased to hold him, and what did it matter now? O Dovach, Dovach! surely she traded upon his fears, surely she made much of her drooping and decline! She would not waste away, she would not die. Dying, would she relent at last,—pity him, be friends with him in the hour of release? Dying! folly! He would ride and run, send the priests and the wise woman to hunt out witch-hazel, hart's tongue, ground ivy, pluck the blade under the propitious planet,

gather the blossom dank and heavy with precious dew : if that failed, procure by gold or the sword the mystic chalcidony, the onyx, the blood-stone. Tempestuous as were Sir Raoul's thoughts, he was little used to the inaction of this hot, glaring noon, and so he soon sank down drowsily, his long limbs among the dragon-flies, the flags, and the yellow irises, his fretting cares resolving themselves into troublous dreams.

Suddenly Sir Raoul's slumber was broken by a sound such as he had never heard in this lower world. Was it flitting fancy still? or could it have been Dovach's voice, not formally—not in tones sharp as steel—but beseeching, confiding, in their agony,—"O! Raoul, Raoul! where are you?" They wailed "Raoul!" they cried, "Come!"

Sir Raoul started up with his eyes straining from their sockets, his brown cheeks blistering, not so much with the beating sun, as with the boiling passion of that mania. Peaceful stood the red walls of Baikie, no foe apprised of its desertion clamouring at its gate, Sir Raoul's banner planted on the topmost pinnacle hanging motionless. It must have been a delusion. But hark! again "Raoul, Raoul!" close at hand, right across the river from the turret window—his lady's window. And wist you what Sir Raoul felt? Let who will talk of horrors! when Mahound's black, foul face, which he had left caged in darkness, appeared at the open casement, thrust out, leering round, then withdrawn for a second, to return in company with a white burden struggling with him, which he pushed through the aperture and poised high in dizzy air over the castle moat.

Sir Raoul had stood dumb, but he broke the spell with a wrench such as a man employs to tear himself from the night-hag, Mara. "Monster! Fiend!" he shrieked, "hold back!"

Mahound was arrested in his aim; he recognised his master's presence, but it was only to fling back his head with a bitter laugh and shout in reply: "I thought to have given you a surprise, Sir Raoul; I did not hope to have you for a witness. Ho! ho! Now was not I as canny as any of your favourites, to discern that the loss of ring, or beaker, or bird, would plague you less than the want of your blooming lady, whom you banned out of your sight yestreen? One heave, and she goes, Sir Raoul! Who is the dog—the worm—the accursed, beastly Moor, to-day?"

Sir Raoul was down on his knees. "Mahound, what will it profit you? I will set you free, make you rich, to the half of my land, knave. I swear it by the Rood."

"What! share alike with you, Sir Raoul! But your heartstrings saved! No, my fine lord; find another price for my withdrawal!"

"The whole lands, then, Mahound, villain, or my life! my life! I will pluck out my heart, if you will not avenge yourself on her who took your part, you venomous asp, nay, Mahound, Mahound!"

"You spare the ill names, now," Sir Raoul! Nothing but Mahound, Mahound. You might have been a siccater man this day, if you had given me a more Christian-like title. They told me it was your devil, and your devil I'll be, my master. Her

mercy, quotha! I know what it came to, I know and you know, how madam bridled and drew in her skirts; it was but to thwart her master, Sir Raoul. Ha, ha! she and I are not so far apart. Bid your blythe lady farewell, Sir Raoul."

"Oh! man, mortal, if you be not the arch-fiend I mocked, is there no ransom? Can I pay none that will abet your own love of life; for you know, Mahound, you will die within twelve hours for this deed; it is hopeless to think of escape, you will die inch by inch, as surely as you will burn in hell."

"What care I for the life that you rendered worse than the cat's, that, poor beast! has nine lives, or yon corbie's, which, unhappy bird! outlasts a hundred years. Your hell is not my hell. Bid your bonny wife farewell, Sir Raoul; they do say she was laith to come, but, by my word, she is laith, too, to go."

"Is there nothing in the wide universe you will take—heavens fall and cover her! Christ come down and sain her!" groans Sir Raoul, with the big sweat-drops hailing from his brow.

"Stay," cries Mahound, mowing and capering. "You said my skin was black, Sir Raoul, as if your boot had stamped the dye, and my nose flat, as if your sword had pommeled it, and my mouth slit and laid over, as if your dagger had cut and spread it. Make me a gift of your red and brown skin, master, your high nose, your arched mouth—fling them to me across the water, Sir Raoul, and your pinging dame may remain scatheless for me."

Sir Raoul had gripped his hanger all these terrible moments—he did not hesitate a second, he lifted his hand against himself, and the blow came down shearing to the bone.

Oh! mighty love which many waters could not quench, stronger than death, deeper than the grave, refusing not that pain, indignity, and shame. Blinded and faint in his agony, Sir Raoul heard again that voice which had hailed him thus once before, and once only, it penetrated his throbbing brain, it dulled the torment, the rage, the humiliation, it thrilled him with delight and bliss. She saw his hand raised with her dying eyes, she knew what he, the man of blood, would do for her—that which pale death itself. She awoke to one of those great hidden truths near every one of us, she cried piteously with her last breath:

"Raoul, my Raoul, let me go, spare yourself."

"Oh! that strange sweet rapture filled his veins, it shivered through him, it affected him like witchcraft, it raised the very hairs of his head like inspiration.

"Well done!" jeers Mahound, "but I've thought better of my bargain."

"My Raoul," the knight hears alone, sinking down on the grass.

A scream, a rush, a splash, the bubble of foam bells on the dull, alimy moat, and the white waif is gone for ever!

"My Raoul!" is whispered in the ringing ears of the Laird of Baikie, as he closes his eyes by the bright sparkling stream.

But Sir Raoul recovers, stiff, sore, and strange: sunshine and silence, the firm castle walls, the restless Iala water, an open empty window, before him. He comprehends with an awful shock; he waits a moment; he crawls along,

as other poor victims have done after him; he sees the weeds on the moat broken and streaked as the Northern lights in a winter sky; and down in the thick obscurity something white—dimly discernible. He stays another dreary interval, summoning back his ebbing strength, and plunges in and drags out, he knows not how, a dripping, disordered woman's figure, dead—dead! the pale-face marble verily now, the deep eyes glassy and glazed. He lies down beside her on the turf where he is lord, and has not prevented her cruel murder; but in his despair an angel looks down on him, and murmurs again, weakly and fondly, "My Raoul, spare yourself!"

Yea, Sir Raoul never ceases to hear these words during the whole of his future pilgrimage and warfare: he never loses them in the utmost temptation and trial. He listens to them even when the demon Mahound is dragged before him; and amidst the furious clamour he bids them have "a life for life," without pincers, or red-hot irons,

or slaying knives. He seems to be answering them when he rides abroad once more, and his wistful eyes look over his mask and appeal to those who were wont to gaze upon him in admiration and covetousness,—who stare stealthily in wonder and vague regret now,—appeal half haughtily and fiercely, half eagerly and tenderly, "You see me disfigured and mutilated in vain, for her who in life could not forgive me, but who in death declared herself mine. I do not grudge it for Dovach."

Sir Raoul might be less dreaded, bearing the sad marks of his love, but more clave unto him; for, inexplicable as it was to many, he was a more sober-minded and merciful man after his misfortune than before it. Heaven grant that we too, like this wild, lawless Sir Raoul, may show ourselves purged and purified by adversity; that our chronicler may have reason to quote of us what was indited of Job: "The Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning."

